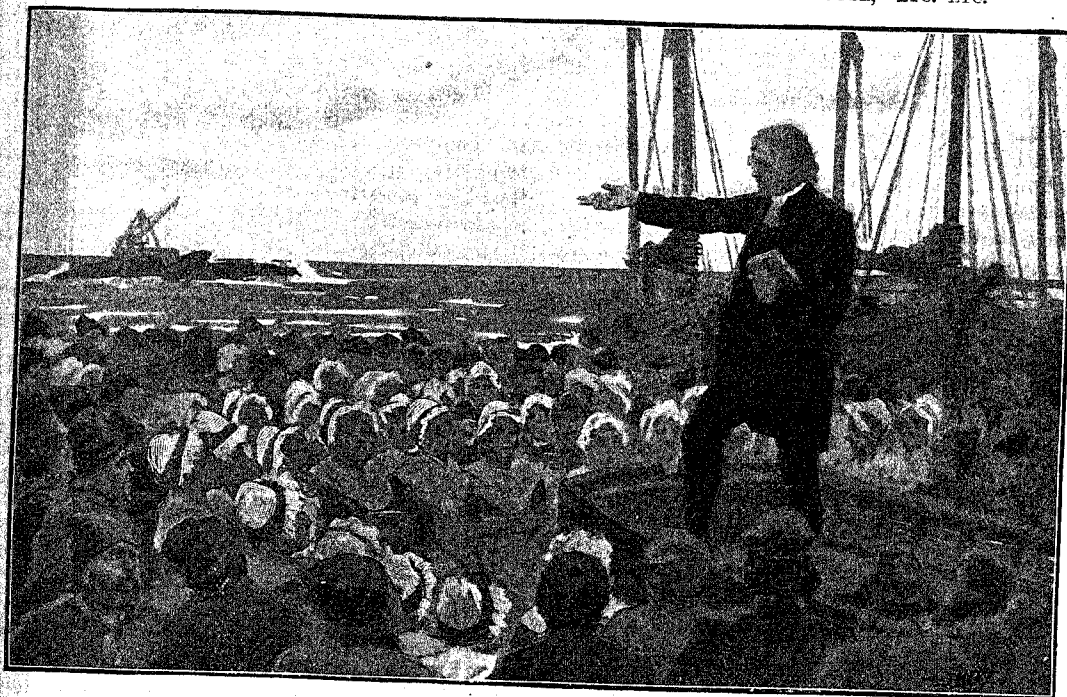


## THE PARSON'S LIGHTHOUSE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

BY J. F. ROWBOTHAM, M.A., AUTHOR OF "SOLOMON BUILT HIM AN HOUSE," ETC. ETC.



"Held a great open-air service on the shore."—p 463.

**T**HE little village of Sandiford stands on the Dorsetshire coast, and its population consists entirely of fishermen and their wives and families. All along the shore in a limitless line are the fishing-boats drawn up; behind them the sheds which the fishermen use for some mysterious purpose of their craft, and behind these again, on a low eminence, the cottages. Of these latter there are about five or six hundred in all, containing as many families, and a population of about two or three thousand souls.

There was not a hamlet or a house near Sandiford. It was isolated from all surroundings save those of the sea and the sand, and the inhabitants were as primitive and unconventional a race as you could wish to see. They were said to be the descendants of an old Norse colony who settled here before the Conquest, and have contrived to maintain their footing and their nationality in a marvellous manner ever since. The men wore the thick blue jerseys and the red caps of the French fishermen, and the women were remarkable for their neat kirtles and quaint head-gear, which may be seen in some seaside villages in Normandy at the present day.

Not only for their spiritual and intellectual wants, but in a great measure for many of their physical ones likewise, the inhabitants were dependent on their clergyman—their "parson," as they universally called him—who was the leading inhabitant of the village. The various physical wants we allude to were the supply of savouries and delicacies at time of illness, of medicines whenever necessary, of clothing frequently, of blankets, bedding very often, and indeed of the entire furniture of a cottage sometimes, when a family, left suddenly destitute by the death of its father and bread-winner, was turned out of house and home by an iniquitous landlord, and was enabled to recommence life again by the kindness of the "Parson of the Fisher-folk."

The Rev. Gerald Montague was perpetual curate of Sandiford. He was called a vicar, but was only a titular one. He had come to the village as curate-in-charge a great many years ago, and had grown to be so interested in the people and their quaint ways that he had stayed there, despite that other preferment had been offered him; and he had grown grey in his devotion to the villagers and his affectionate interest in all their wants.